U-M studies booze

Stress, guilt worsen hangovers

How you feel before you start drinking and while you are under the influence affects how many hangover symptoms you have the next morning.

Ernest Harburg, a University of Michigan professor of epidemiology and psychology, says that persons who have had a stressful year, are emotional, or feel guilt or anger while drinking report more hangover symptoms than other persons who have consumed comparable amounts of alcohol.

"The results suggest that hangover symptoms have both physiological and psychological sources," said Harburg. "The data link negative life events and mood states with drinking after-effects."

This is true regardless of whether you drink heavily, moderately or lightly, said Harburg.

HARBURG studied the drinking habits of persons in a small Michigan community with colleagues Deborah Davis and K. Michael Cummings, Wayne State University, and Robert Gunn, Veterans Administration Medical Center, Ann Arbor.

They asked residents about events that had occurred within the last year such as death of a family member or loss of a job, about their drinking habits and about their hangover symptoms.

Persons who reported more life stress over the last year reported a greater number of hangover symptoms at every level of intensity regardless of the amount of alcohol consumed, he reported. This relationship was stronger for those drinking less alcohol, particularly women, than for heavier drinkers.

Also, feelings of guilt and anger were related to hangover symptoms, especially for women.

"The results show that despite the quantity consumed, subjects who were consciously guilty about their drinking report more hangover symptoms fairly consistently. This is especially true for the heavier drinkers," Harburg said.

ALTHOUGH FEW women reported feeling guilty about drinking, among those who did, guilt was related to a greater number of alcohol symptoms than among men who felt guilty.

"Women who reported anger while drinking also reported more hangover symptoms," Harburg said.

Not all normal drinkers reported suffering from their drinking. Surprisingly, given the general cultural belief that drinking too much inevitably leads to hangovers, 20 percent of all drinkers who reported getting high or drunk, regardless of age, sex or quantity consumed, said they never experienced hangovers. Forty percent reported only mild symptoms.

This research was part of the Tecumseh Community Health Study, a long-term look at community health begun in 1959. Several rounds of intensive medical exams have been administered to the residents of Tecumseh (pop. 10,000) and studies made of the relationships among heredity, alcohol use, temperament, life styles and risks of various diseases.

In this particular study, persons were divided into groups by age, emotionalism, drinking, levels, negative life events and numbers and severity of hangover symptoms. The results were reported in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol.

Kelley uses proposals D, H against Edison

Attorney General Frank J. Kelley has won the denial of a $21.6-million Detroit Edison rate increase by a state Public Service Commission (PSC) hearing officer.

Kelley had opposed the boost in electricity charges, saying the request was banned by proposals D and H approved by voters in the Nov. 2 election.

The proposals, under a preliminary order by Ingham Circuit Court Judge Thomas L. Brown, require a "full and complete hearing of rate adjustments" and prohibit certain automatic adjustments of rates.

EDISON ARGUED that the increase it sought, based on changes in the consumer price index (CPI), is not an automatic adjustment. It contended that a December hearing on the increase in the CPI meets the "full and complete" hearing test.

Hearing Officer Theodora Mace, in granting Kelley's motion to dismiss Edison's rate-hike request, said the limited hearing on the CPI increase is not sufficient to comply with the proposals' requirements.

Detroit Edison has the right to appeal her decision to the full commission.

"This ruling reflects the first fruit of the action of the voters in abolishing utility rate adjustment clauses," Kelley said.

"If it is sustained by the PSC and the courts, it will represent significant progress in slowing the pace of Edison's rate increases."

THE UTILITY sought the hike in electricity charges through an indexing system begun by the PSC in 1978.